

App. No 09/936,674
Amdt. Dated May 12, 2004
Reply to Final Office Action of February 24, 2004

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 14 - 33 are pending in this application.

The Examiner is thanked for the indication of allowable subject matter, and in conformity therewith allowable claim 26 has been combined with base claim 14. Furthermore, in conformity with the Examiner's helpful comments, claim 14 has been amended for clarification purposes only. It is respectfully submitted that no new issues are involved since this clarification of claim 14 is inherent in the original language of claim 14, namely that a second process container is disposed adjacent to the first process container such that they share the wall 9 in which the opening is provided. In other words, since the two adjacent process containers 2 and 60 share the wall 9 in which the opening is provided, such opening must also connect the first and second process containers, and their chambers would inherently be on opposite sides of the wall 9 (otherwise the wall would not be shared or common), as shown in Fig. 3.

With regard to claim 14, and the Examiner's rejection thereof under 35 USC 103(a) over Kishi, the following comments are offered. Applicant's claim 14 requires that one wall of the second process container be at least partially that wall of the first process container in which the at least one opening is provided. The Examiner indicates that Kishi comprises a wall with an opening that is common to both containers. Applicant respectfully disagrees. With regard to Figure 3 of Kishi, the treatment tank 3 and the storage tank 2 do not share between them (Applicant's requirement that the two adjacent containers share the wall having the opening) a wall with an opening that "is closeable from outside of the first process container via a substrate" as required by Applicant's claim 14. Kishi requires two different walls to satisfy the two features that

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Applicant requires to be fulfilled by one and the same wall.

If the Examiner is referring to Figure 4 of Kishi, and considers the process container 3a as the first process container, then the process container 3b would be the second process container. On one side, the two process containers 3a and 3b are connected by a common storage tank 2. A respective, i.e. separate, opening 5 is provided in that side wall of each of the process containers 3a and 3b that is disposed across from the common storage tank. However, as can be clearly seen from the plan view of Figure 4, the process containers 3a and 3b are laterally spaced from one another. Thus, each of the process containers 3a and 3b has its own side wall that is provided with an opening and that faces away from the tank 2. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that Kishi does not teach or suggest a wall that is provided with an opening that at the same time is common to both said first and second process containers, as required by Applicant's claim 14 that provides the wall 9, with the opening 29, that is common to the two adjacent process containers 2, 60.

Finally, Applicant's claim 14 requires both that the opening 29 in the common wall 9 be closeable from outside of the first process container 2 via a substrate, i.e. by the substrate 31 which, as shown in Fig. 3 of the instant application, must then be disposed in the second process container 60, as well as that the opening 29 is also closeable, e.g. via the anode plate 20, from the direction of the first process container 2.

There is certainly no teaching or suggestion in Kishi for this second requirement of claim 14 that a common opening also be closeable from the direction of the first process container. For the advantages that can be achieved by these two separate requirements for closing the opening, the Examiner's attention is respectfully directed to

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the specification of the present application, in particular the paragraph bridging pages 3 and 4.

With regard to the secondary reference of Dimock, for the sake of completeness Applicant refers to the comments made in Applicant's previous amendment dated December 4, 2003. However, Applicant would like to point out that one of ordinary skill in the art would find no motivation to combine a system having a load lock portion for a sputter machine with a system for an electrolyte treatment where a process container opening is covered by a substrate that is to be treated. There is certainly no suggestion or motivation for combining Kishi and Dimock in such a way as to provide the features required by Applicant's claim 14.

In view of the foregoing discussion, and the amendments to the claims, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the allowability of all of claims 14 – 33 of the instant application. In addition, should the Examiner have any further comments or suggestions, the undersigned respectfully requests a telephone interview in order to discuss any outstanding issues and to expedite placement of the application into condition for allowance.

Respectfully Submitted,



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